

# Mediation and *Metaxý*

—The Interval between Analog Animality and Digital Humanity

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The study of media is, in the most literal sense, the study of the interval, the in-between. The very word ‘medium’, of the Latin *medius*, is testament to this fact. As Eugene Thacker writes, ‘with media and mediation, everything happens in the middle’ (‘Dark Media’, 90). In this essay, I focus upon a particular type of middle—specifically the Greek *metaxý*—as it is expressed in the Neoplatonism of the third century philosopher Plotinus, in order to think more precisely the position of the non-human animal, and its connection to mediation. Gilbert Simondon argues that the question of animal life reflects ‘the problem of the relation between intelligence, habit, instinct, and life’ (31), and I believe that it is thus important to think carefully about *how* this relationality is conceptualized; how animals might be thought of in relation to the fundamental problematic of mediation. Plotinus’ hierarchy between animals, humans, and gods is emblematic of a pattern within Western thought whereby humanity is defined not positively (in terms of its own qualities), but negatively (in relation to animal irrationality on the one side, and divine ideality on the other), such that it is the animals and gods (or angels)—one determined entirely by its instincts, the other freed by its own self-determination—that allow us to demarcate our own space within the universe. This essentially Epimethean logic of humanity as lacking any distinct ability of its own (unlike all the other animals) persists to the present day, and yet, I want to suggest that it isn’t the difference between animals and divinity that defines us today, but rather that between animals and computation: the analog and the digital.

In an era of scholarship increasingly attuned to critical questions of posthumanism and animality—one that seeks to construct a *polis* not exclusively confined to the human being; not defined entirely in relation to what Aristotle, in the *Politics*, refers to as the *politikon zōon* (the ‘political animal’, capable of speech, and thus in possession of *logos*)—the question of how we define the human in relation to other entities, be they machines or other living creatures, looms large. In the space of such a short article, it would be impossible to make any grand claims regarding how we can or should approach this question. Instead, I wish to focus closely upon this Plotinian conception of *metaxý*, and its interesting resonances in the work of Jacques Lacan, who implicitly retains and reconfigures the notion of the human being as a mediator. Lacan replicates this ancient narrative (humanity as caught in between divinity and animality), but does so within the context of a cyberneticism that replaces gods and angels with symbolic computation. Humanity, according to such a conception, is tacitly regarded not only as a mediator, but as that which is mediated, the subject caught within a significative network modelled on the basis of then-new systems of digital computation. Within this Lacanian framework, I will argue, the new media animal (that is, the non-human animal as understood under the terms of this digital media environment) is precisely that creature which, in its own thought and behaviour, eludes all digitization.

In the *Enneads*, a collection of his extensive treatises that his student Porphyry compiled and edited, Plotinus—who regards himself as a loyal and faithful adherent to Plato’s philosophy—outlines a hierarchy of living creatures, wherein ‘man [*sic*] is not the best kind of creature in the universe, but *midway between*

gods and beasts' (*Ennead III*, 40, my emphasis). Humanity then, according to this cosmic order structured by the divine *logos*, sits approximately in the middle of all these creatures, exhibiting neither the brute instinctuality of animals, nor the pure understanding of gods, but instead manifesting a mixture of both these qualities. Of course, not all women or men are equal in this respect: some are more irrational, placing them closer to animals or beasts, whilst others have managed to at least partly throw off the illusory desires of the material world, arriving at a level of contemplation and self-knowledge that moves them closer to divinity. Whatever the case, however, the crucial thing about this account in the way is which Plotinus places human beings in the position of *metaxy*—the middle, the mediator, the in-between—such that their status within this cosmic order is determined less by their own qualities than by their relation to these other entities.

For Plotinus, animals (along with infants and the mentally impaired) all operate on blind impulse and sense perception, rather than reason. At the same time, however, as emanations of the One (the source of all that exists; a purely generative power or potentiality that cannot be subsumed under any concept, or even spoken of in any sense that extends beyond mere signifying gesture), all of these creatures, like men and women, share in the principles of Intellect and Soul. This is the corresponding hierarchy of emanation that Plotinus establishes: first, pouring out directly from the One itself, is the Intellect as a divine ideality, divided between contemplation of the One and of the Ideas; second is the Soul, which is likewise divided between the contemplation of said Ideas, and production of a sensible world that represents their corrupted, degraded material presence. 'The Soul is not only a point of mediation, closely associated with Intellect; it is the very continuum between the One (as absolutely transcendent) and the world (as fully contingent)' (Thacker, *After Life*, 31). Interestingly, even though animals (including some humans) are doomed to remain trapped within this lower part of the Soul, a realm of difference, flux, and empirical uncertainty, this does not indicate a flaw in the universal ordering of the *logos*:

the formative principle did not make everything gods but some gods, some spirits (a nature of the second rank), then men and animals after them in order, not out of grudging meanness but by a reason containing all the rich variety of the intelligible world. (*Ennead III*, 79)

Variety is necessary for the richness of the world, for things do not need to be *good* in order to be *reasonable* (in the sense of according with reason).

Although he does not draw upon it explicitly, Plotinus' position on the role of humanity fits quite neatly into the framework established by Plato in the *Protagoras*, wherein he expounds the myth of Epimetheus (he who thinks too late) and Protagoras (he who thinks too far ahead): when Prometheus steals fire and technical ingenuity from the gods, he does so to compensate for the foolishness of his brother Epimetheus, who absent-mindedly forgot about humanity when he bestowed specific attributes upon all of the animals, leaving the former defenceless. According to this fable, remarks Bernard Stiegler, 'whereas animals are positively endowed with qualities, it is *tekhnē* that forms the lot of humans, and *tekhnē* is prosthetic; that is, it is entirely artifice' (*Technics*, 193). The uniqueness of humanity lies in this negativity, the lack of a teleological function that forces it to invent its own qualities, to rely upon that which is external to itself, to become a *technical* being. We witness this clearly in Plotinus, who argues that a man should be responsible for his actions, because 'if he was able to add something to make himself better, he is responsible to himself for not doing it', whereas plants and animals can only improve themselves as a result of the intervention of their creator, and thus 'it is absurd to ask for more than was given' (*Enneads III*, 117-18). The responsibility that humanity holds for its own actions rests entirely upon its mutability and lack of positive qualities.

Plotinus represents a mediational movement in philosophical discourse, 'a trembling mid-point between the birth of Christian metaphysics and the death of the disembodied *logos* of Plato' (Kroker & Cook, *Postmodern Scene*, 293). Although he seems to have no particular interest in Christianity himself, instead attempting to revive the ancient pagan traditions of the Platonism that he so reveres (whilst simultaneously denouncing the gnostic traditions emerging during his time, which promised a secret, mystical truth quite

different to that which he taught), Plotinus would nevertheless have an immeasurable influence upon mediaeval Christian philosophy (his only real competitor in this respect being Aristotle, whose revival in the West would come many centuries later), acting in effect as a mediator between the pagan and Christian worlds. In particular, it is Plotinus' influence upon the early Christian philosopher Saint Augustine—whose import in the development of mediaeval scholasticism was second only to Aristotle—that marks his historical relevance, Augustine's considerable body of work (drawing heavily upon Plotinian concepts) ensuring that Platonic ideas endured within Western Europe in spite of the lack of access to almost any of Plato's actual writings. It is not surprising, then, for us to find resonances of Plotinus' postulates in contemporary thought, even if specific references are somewhat sparse.

At first consideration, the notion of *metaxý* that Plotinus puts forward would seem to have little relevance within modern thought: on the one hand, a multitude of scientific discoveries (e.g. Copernicus' heliocentric model of the universe, Darwin's theory of natural selection, etc.) have challenged not only the privileged position that the philosophers of antiquity bestowed upon humanity, but also the very notion of such a hierarchy existing in the first place; on the other hand, philosophy (at least in the continental tradition) has become increasingly subject-centric, Kant's so-called 'Copernican revolution' giving the human subject an epistemological agency that was once the exclusive preserve of divinity. French philosophy has especially defined itself in relation, whether positive or negative, to the humanistic principles of existentialism (an offshoot of phenomenology), which proffers to humanity attributes once reserved for the divine.

'Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself', declares Jean-Paul Sartre (*Existentialism*, 28), alluding to the commensurability in kind (albeit not in quantity) that Descartes proposes between the freedom of humanity and that of God. Yet in making this argument, the existentialists still measured humans against God and animals, merely deciding that, at least in regard to agency and responsibility, they were closer to the former than the latter. The irony of the critique of such humanism that would then predominate in French thought in the second half of the twentieth century is that it involved the emptying and supposed dismantling of what was, for the most part, an already empty concept: quite consistently, these purported humanists were never really thinking the human as a discrete, self-contained entity; instead, they were always thinking a relation, a mediation, between the seeming certainties of those creatures (and gods) by which the human is bounded. On this point, François Laruelle observes that

the twentieth century contested the concept of man by struggling against it universally and by every means possible. Philosophy having accomplished a critique of humanism, the human sciences took over and hurried to destroy not only humanism but man himself. His essence and his existence were contested at both extremes by animality, divinity, and a third term, technics. (*General Theory*, 15)

It is precisely this third term—the *tekhnē* that Prometheus gifted to humanity—that I now wish to focus upon, with reference to one of these aforementioned critiques of humanism: the psychoanalytic theory of Lacan.

In the traditional Freudian account, the urges of the id signify animal-like impulses and desires that are gradually suppressed in the human by the development of the ego. In this respect, Freud remains within a framework whereby humanity splits the difference between the primitive drives of the animal kingdom (the id) and the higher law that keeps our behaviour in check (the superego, supplanting the position once held by the divine). To some degree Lacan also follows this pattern, describing in the mirror stage 'a narcissism connected with the corporeal image' by which the subject recognizes in its reflected image an imaginary unity (the ideal ego) that 'gives his *Umwelt* its form, in as much as he is man and not horse' (*Seminar I*, 125). This originary narcissism, which organizes the subject's reality along a limited set of lines, differs greatly between humans and animals. In the latter 'there is a limited number of pre-established correspondences between its imaginary structure and whatever interests it in its *Umwelt*' (ibid.), thus consigning it to drives designed to perpetuate their survival as individuals, and as a species more broadly. In the former, by contrast, 'the reflection in the mirror indicates an original noetic possibility, and introduces

a second narcissism' (ibid.), relating it to the Other (the ego-ideal), and thus identifying itself with the structures and rules of the symbolic order. It is exactly this relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic, the latter of which would seem to definitively mark the threshold between humanity and animality, which will be examined.

Lacan's most frequently noted definition of the mark of distinction between animality and humanity is that 'an animal does not feign feigning'—unable to affect the appearance of deceit, the animal cannot make itself 'the subject of the signifier' (*Écrits*, 683). This is an odd description, but it is also quite telling in regard to the discussion that will follow. The paradox of Lacan's claim here, as Derrida points out, is that whilst '[t]he subject of the signifier is subject(ed) to the signifier', such that '[e]ntry into the human order of the law presupposes this passive finitude, this infirmity, this lack from which the animal does not suffer', at the same time, 'to be subject of the signifier is also to be a subjecting subject, a subject as *master*, an active and deciding subject of the signifier' (*Animal*, 130). In other words, we have here a repetition of the aforementioned Epimethean myth, wherein a congenital fault becomes an advantage—in this case, the subject's traumatic ingress into the symbolic order (the realm of language) marks both its condition of boundedness to the rules of the signifier and its intersubjective relations, and the limits of this order in relation to its Other.

To explain this further, for Lacan, we must comprehend the 'juncture between the animal, who gets about without structuring situations, and man, who inhabits a symbolic world' (*Seminar I*, 225). The symbolic is the linguistic or semiotic network—an order of signs that is laid over our experience of the world—that constitutes this experience as a totality. It is a perpetually deferred, endlessly differing chain of signifiers within which our thought is confined. Such identification of humanity with language is not in itself unusual: Heidegger, for instance, suggests that Aristotle's reference in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the human as a *zōon logon echon* (a phrase usually translated as 'rational animal') in fact reflects the common-sense understanding of the human being 'as that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse' (*Being and Time*, 47), presenting such discursiveness as a distinctive mode of revealing. There are two things to note about this though: firstly, the Aristotelian formulation still does not offer us a genuinely positive account of the human, instead positioning the human as the limited benefactor of a divine *logos* or reason that extends far beyond the meagre capacities of mortals; secondly, Heidegger views such a conception of *logos* as compromised by the modern, technical mindset, arguing that 'cybernetics transforms language into an exchange of news' ('End of Philosophy', 313), reducing the world to an undifferentiated substratum of information, a universalized calculability, that uniformly orders all things and creatures as standing-reserve.

This latter fact is notable because Lacan does not merely associate the symbolic order with language, but rather, with a particular understanding of digital computation. 'The machine,' he proclaims, 'is simply the succession of little 0s and 1s, so that the question as to whether it is human or not is obviously entirely settled—it isn't' (*Seminar II*, 319). The machine may not be human, but neither is the human, he goes on to suggest, necessarily wholly human: there is a machinic component to the functioning of the human being, and this is precisely the symbolic order by which the narcissistic gap or tension between the ego and its Other (the ego-ideal) opens up the aforementioned rule-based system of presence and absence—a linguistic machine completely independent of us as individuals—to which the subject feels obliged to obey. In particular, the pleasure principle, the tendency to maintain homeostasis and constancy by seeking out pleasure and avoiding unpleasure, is described by Lacan as the means to 'inscribe the concrete functioning of man considered as a machine in a coherent system of symbolic formulations' (*Seminar II*, 62). What we have then is a human subject riven between two distinct forms of narcissism: that of the imaginary, which it shares in some way with the animal, and that of the symbolic, which it shares with the computer—more specifically, the universal Turing machine, which is able to compute any possible computable sequence, even those algorithms by which such a computation is facilitated. The language of the symbolic order circulates 'in the universal machine, which is more universal than anything you could imagine' (*Seminar II*, 284).

'The cybernetic concept of the machine and the digital language of information theory,' writes John Johnston, 'led Lacan to believe that the world of the symbolic is the world of the machine' (*Allure*, 67). In

sharp contradistinction to the once-influential accounts of Descartes and Malebranche (who both viewed the animal as a soulless automaton, entirely in thrall to pre-determined laws), this inhuman or machinic component of the ego is not that which compromises the freedom of humanity, for 'the machine is much freer than the animal', the latter existing in effect as a machine that is fixed in its function, operating with 'certain parameters that are no longer capable of variation' (*Seminar II*, 41). Thus, Lacan goes on to argue, 'it is in as much as, compared to the animal, we are machines, that is to say something decomposed, that we possess greater freedom, in the sense in which freedom means the multiplicity of possible choices' (*Seminar II*, 41). What we see here, then, are two distinct kinds of machine: the former, which he associates with the animal, is the same kind of automaton, given a set number of tasks and unable to alter its own functionality, which is described in the Cartesian model; the latter, the choices of which constantly proliferate as a result of its self-differentiating code, is a universal Turing machine that bears very little resemblance to the mechanical automaton. Animals, unlike humans, are not split between imaginary and symbolic orders, but reside entirely within the former, thus lacking the actionable choices that even a computer possesses.

Accordingly, it would not seem totally inaccurate if we averred that humanity is, according to the Lacanian model, caught in the middle between the analog animality of the imaginary and the digital computation of the symbolic:

what difference is there between what belongs to the imaginary or real orders and what belongs to the symbolic order? In the imaginary or real orders we always have more and less, a threshold, a margin, continuity. In the symbolic order every element has value through being opposed to another. (*Seminar III*, 9)

This crucial distinction, between the indivisible continuity of the imaginary order, and the discrete symbolic codes of the symbolic order, alludes to the then-emergent disciplines of cybernetics and information theory, both of which would exercise a considerable influence upon French structuralism. Information theory in particular, as inaugurated by the work of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, deals quite directly with the divergent challenges of encoding continuous and discrete signals—the former of which we would now designate the 'analog', and the latter the 'digital'—in its attempts to quantify the statistical capacities and limitations of signal processing through various technical channels. In the words of Alexander Galloway, we can understand the operations of the digital as 'the making-discrete of the hitherto fluid, the hitherto whole, the hitherto integral' (*Laruelle*, 52), as opposed to the analog, which 'creates relation without distinction' (56). In short, animals, in their sole dependence upon the imaginary order (for they have no language of their own, only codes), are in essence analog, whilst humans, being split between the imaginary *and* symbolic orders, are irrevocably torn between the analog and the digital. Lacan himself notes that one could find a theory of knowledge capable of supporting psychoanalysis within the philosophy of Plotinus (*Seminar XI*, 134), and in accordance with this I would suggest that we see a fundamental resonance here, albeit substantially reoriented, with the latter's concept of *métaxy*.

Computation is attributed a sense of agency by Lacan that would never have been projected upon any prior form of machinery, reflecting his position within an intellectual milieu that would, in the words of Norbert Wiener (the creator of cybernetics), 'admit machines to the field of language and yet almost totally deny language to the ants' (*Human Use*, 77). On one level, cybernetics spurned the notion of any essential difference between machines, humans, and animals, all of which are determined by the same mechanisms of communication and control; on another level, though, Wiener retains the basic Aristotelian definition of the human as the animal that possesses *logos*, albeit giving this latter power to computation also. Lacan makes a similar manoeuvre, *contra* Heidegger, directly identifying the symbolic order with the *logos* by which the operations of our unconscious are facilitated. As Johnston writes, 'Lacan understood the symbolic function as a particular kind of computational assemblage that made human behavior meaningful' (*Allure*, 67). In a move that seems remarkably prescient in retrospect, Lacan views the human being as subject to an 'exteriorised appearance of language' (*Seminar I*, 179) that unambiguously resembles the cybernetic logic of computation, one that precedes (and arguably conditions also) the technical instantiations of computing with which we are familiar. Against the traditional opposition (from Plato through Heidegger)

between the vivifying force of discourse and the deadened instrumentality of technics, Lacan seems to tacitly recognize that '*logos* and *tekhnē* are modalities of the same being-outside-oneself' (Stiegler, *Technics*, 193), viewing the aforementioned cybernetic logic as coterminous with the symbolic order through which all language, spoken or otherwise, is facilitated.

We live at a time in which our basic cognitive faculties are more and more mediated by computing, an *episteme* wherein the digital or the digitizing is perceived as a necessary component of thought. It is surely no real surprise then to suggest that our understanding of noetic processes would necessitate recourse to the technical standards of the media by which they are measured. This is certainly the claim put forward by Friedrich Kittler:

a contemporary theory of consciousness which does not situate consciousness in the technical realm, as does Lacan, but has consciousness simultaneously transmit, store and calculate like a true behemoth without specifying the media or the technologies involved is merely a euphemism. (Kittler, 'World', 133)

The hierarchy that Plotinus explicates, with the irrational animals at the bottom, the perfectly rational gods at the top, and humans sitting exactly in the middle is amended by Lacan, the divinity of prior ages being superseded by the symbolic processing of (now ubiquitous) computation. This in itself is actually a good reason to be suspicious of the Lacanian formulation: to quote Marshall McLuhan, 'by continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servo-mechanisms', such that 'we must, to use them at all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions' (*Understanding*, 50-51).

The death of God—'the spiritual reality of our time' (Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 143)—it would seem, has placed something of the inhuman (represented here by this symbolic network of computation) rather than the divine within the human being. On this point, Kittler observes that 'psychoanalysis no longer constructs psychic apparatuses (if they are still psychic) merely out of storage and transmission media', as it did in the time of Freud through his metaphor of the Mystic Pad, 'but rather incorporates the entire technical triad of storage, transmission and computation' ('World', 135). This shift is not just evident in psychoanalysis though, playing a major role also in the development of cognitive psychology, which sees parallels between processes of human thought and the computational functions of computers, and attempts to develop formal mathematical models of such cognition. In both cases, what we are dealing with are psychological models that draw upon then-contemporary technical discourses, but are in fact merely components of a much broader and far-reaching logic of enumeration and computability that historically precedes all electronic computing. In the wake of Adam Smith and his conception of self-regulating market forces, writes Sean Cubitt, 'meaning had no divine adjudicator other than a truth reduced to the mathematical infrastructure underlying perceptible reality' (*Practice*, 125-26). Calculability becomes the new theological absolute.

What the Lacanian model in particular does also, however, is reposition the animal as something more than just irrational or even unthinking materiality; instead, the animal becomes a purely analog creature diametrically opposed to the calculative rationality of the computer. Although their exploitation continues largely unabated, especially in the food and agricultural industries, it would seem uncontroversial to suggest that the fact that most animals feel pain, and in some cases exhibit an intelligence that is closer to that of humans than previously surmised, is largely accepted. At the same time, evolutionary and genetic sciences have demonstrated with greater and greater acuity the shared biological traits and historical lineages that tie us to our fellow creatures. In both cases, the result is a gradual dismantling of any sharp barrier between humans and other animals. The distinction that Lacan makes then, is one that relates directly to the notion of computation, and of symbolic processing more broadly: it is these processes that mark such a division between humanity and animality, and they do so by foreclosing the symbolic to animal cognition. The animal becomes that which is analog, that which cannot think digitally, whose thought processes do not seem like poor imitations of the numerically precise calculations of the digital computer.

In any case, what implicitly remains stable in this psychological formulation is the inherent plasticity—and more profoundly, incompleteness—of the human being, the sense in which the latter is merely an interval, a medium that can only be conceptualized in relation to its ontological environs. On the one hand, this would seem to manifest some troubling conclusions, insofar as it still instrumentalizes and exoticizes non-human animals (providing a measure by which the perceived superiority of humanity may be confirmed) and reifies contemporary forms of digital computation (effectively reducing the unfathomable complexities of thought to computational processes). These types of models tend to take the status of animals as given (for Plotinus, they are trapped in the lower part of the soul with no ability to contemplate the Ideas; for Lacan, they are confined to the imaginary order, with no capacity for the communication of their desires), the Neoplatonic version in particular describing a clear and distinct hierarchy of entities (the so-called ‘great chain of being’) that leaves no doubt as to the position of most animals in relation to their human counterparts. And whilst such a system of ranking is explicitly challenged by the biological sciences today (even if it is still reaffirmed at the level of *doxa*), in an *episteme* wherein we valorize the digital above all else (the perception that computation is able to transcend the messy materiality of our own bodies), the fact that animals are typically reduced to little more than commodities is unsurprising.

Lacan makes it abundantly clear, at least in his earlier work, that the human being splits the difference between the pure symbolic generation of the machine and the entirely externally-oriented image fixation of the animal: whilst ‘animal subjects are sensitive to the image of their own kind’, the human being in particular possesses ‘a special relation with his own image—a relation of gap, of alienating tension’, and it is from this tension that ‘the possibility of the order of presence and absence, that is of the symbolic order, comes in’ (*Seminar II*, 323). The result, notes Cubitt, is that in the Lacanian account, ‘[h]uman desire is founded on loss and lack, while animal instinct is presumably ordered by presence and fullness, since it is never mediated by those prohibitions that shape humanity’ (*EcoMedia*, 37). The problem is not so much that a distinction is made between human and non-human animals, nor that this distinction is predicated upon humans having access to a form of symbolic processing denied to other animals (although there is considerable research now suggesting that such a demarcation is at least somewhat unfounded); rather, the issue here is that an implicit hierarchy remains, one in which humanity remains inevitably in the middle, the position of *métaxy*. The position of the human being remains assured.

Simultaneously, however, we can also argue that Plotinus, as much as he is responsible for the codification of such a hierarchy—Arthur Oncken Lovejoy notes that Plotinus assumes ‘the metaphysical necessity and the essential worth of the realization of all the conceivable forms of being, from highest to lowest’ (*Great Chain*, 64), a legacy that would flow forth into mediaeval philosophy—also establishes the conditions for its dismantling: by placing humanity in the middle, between other animals and gods, he posits humanity as an undefined mediator, a threshold between animality and divinity that is always shifting, always porous. This is still a distinction, to be clear, and it is still one that presumes to situate the human above all other animals, but nonetheless it is an *analog*, rather than a digital distinction—a continuum, rather than a series of limit-points. As problematic as it may be, perhaps this is the lesson that we should take from this model, that the ‘act of tearing the human and the biological apart is not an action that is ever successfully completed’ (*EcoMedia*, 25).

The next step then is to think the human not as caught between its superior and inferior counterparts, but as emerging from a process of mediation within which all beings are indeterminately enfolded, a milieu that cannot be subsumed under the linearity of the Plotinian hierarchy. As Cubitt writes:

Of course we carry in us the biology of mammals and our symbioses and parasites. To distinguish human from animal is thus also to establish a fluctuating frontier somewhere within the human, between angel and brute, mind and body, instinct and drive, nature and nurture, sex and gender. That internal border zone, shifting and uncertain as it is, nonetheless defines the external limit between humans and animals. (*EcoMedia*, 25)

Perhaps the new media animal, so to speak, is that which remains irreducible to the classifications of the

symbolic order—not so much in terms of their own cognition (as Lacan would have it), but in regard to the regulatory trajectories of power that stabilize the human subject position in relation to its Others.

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